

City Council Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL **DATE:** March 17, 2009
FROM: PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT **ITEM NO:**
WARDS: ALL
SUBJECT: GRAFFITI PROGRAM—ANNUAL UPDATE

ISSUE:

The issue for City Council consideration is to receive information on the City's multi-department strategy to prevent and remove graffiti, as well as prosecute and seek restitution from graffiti criminals. This report provides: 1) an update on progress subsequent to the August 14, 2007, City Council approval of the Graffiti Enhancement Plan; and 2) a look forward and next steps for the Graffiti Program.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the City Council receive and file the Graffiti Program annual update.

BACKGROUND:

On August 14, 2007, the City Council approved the Graffiti Enhancement Plan. The proliferation of graffiti in the city required strengthening of a multi-departmental strategy involving the Public Works, Police, Information Technology and Parks, Recreation and Community Services Departments and the City Attorney's Office. The departments involved collaboratively developed the Graffiti Enhancement Plan to direct a zero tolerance and multi-faceted attack on graffiti.

The goals of the Graffiti Enhancement Plan are to:

1. Rapidly respond to and remove graffiti;
2. Educate the public to prevent graffiti and promote community involvement;
3. Reward the public for calls that lead to arrests;
4. Document and track graffiti and offenders;
5. Improve arrests and the prosecution of graffiti offenders; and
6. Pursue restitution for property damage.

Since approval of the Graffiti Enhancement Plan eighteen months ago, the departments have implemented the various plan elements. In the following sections, descriptions of each element are provided along with progress that has been accomplished to achieve the Graffiti Enhancement Plan goals. Next steps for each component are also outlined.

1—Rapidly Respond To & Remove Graffiti

The Public Works Department provides graffiti abatement services throughout the City of Riverside striving to provide removal within 24 hours of a report. The number of service calls and removed locations has continued to increase as shown in Chart 1 below. A notable trend is the increase in the number of graffiti service calls received by the City since the transfer of graffiti calls to the Riverside Call Center on March 1, 2006.

As indicated in the chart, it is projected that 31,000 graffiti service requests will be received by the Call Center in 2009, a 867% increase from 2004 when 3,200 calls were received. Another important trend is the dramatic increase in completed graffiti removal locations from the service requests. Each service request may have multiple graffiti locations to clean. It is estimated that in 2009 the amount of graffiti removal locations will almost quadruple from 2004 levels to 91,000 per year.

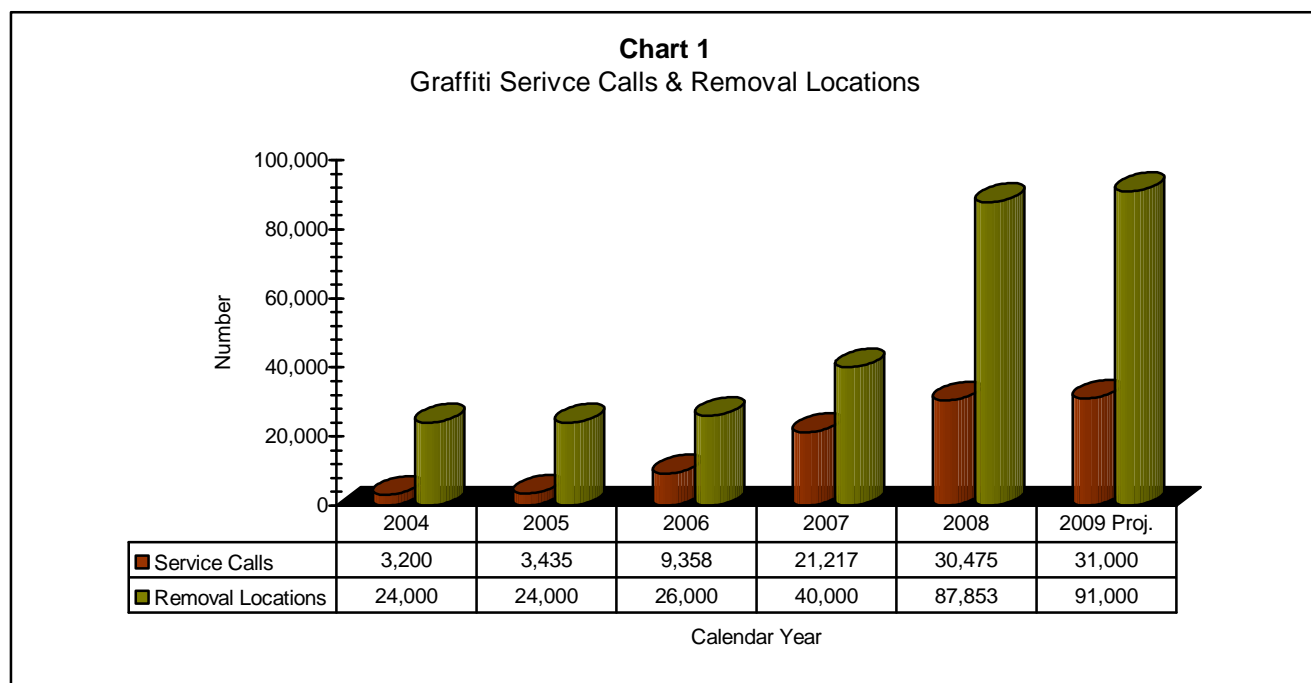
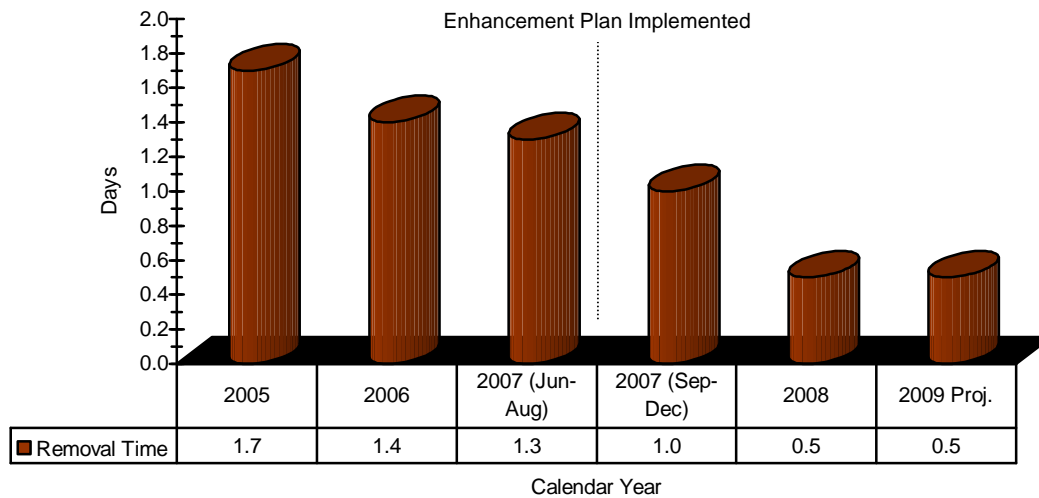


Chart 2 illustrates the Public Works Department's success in attaining its 24-hour removal goal for reported graffiti. The average time (days) to remove graffiti has decreased by approximately 71 percent from 2005 to 2008 (1.7 days to 0.5 days). In 2008, the department removed graffiti within 12 hours of report. Due to the efficiencies implemented in the removal process, the Public Works Department expects to be able to continue to exceed the 24-hour removal goal in 2009.

Several measures have been implemented which are allowing the Public Works Department to rapidly remove graffiti. The steps are outlined below and involve the Public Works, Parks, Recreation and Community Services, and Information Technology Departments.

Chart 2
Graffiti Average Removal Time (Days)



1A—Graffiti Removal—City Crews

There are 10 positions assigned as graffiti abatement field personnel. Of these 10 positions, 8 are assigned different route areas to ensure coverage throughout the city, 1 position is assigned to the sign cleaning crew, and 1 is designated as the Graffiti Education Coordinator. Although this position provides the education program at local schools, participates in City sponsored paint-out events, and conducts business outreach education, the position also reports graffiti daily and may assist in eradicating graffiti in the field.

Graffiti Abatement field personnel remove graffiti 7 days per week. Crews work Monday through Friday from 6:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., with a crew member working Saturday and Sundays from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Each of the graffiti removal work vehicles is outfitted with a trailer mounted pressure washer unit to aid in the quick removal of graffiti. The units are equipped to recover wash water runoff from the activity. Each crew member completes service requests and proactive removal within their respective geographical areas.

In calendar year 2008, City personnel removed graffiti from 60,529 locations. This represents 69% of the removals completed.

Next Steps

The Public Works Department will continue to focus crews on proactive graffiti removal efforts as well as timely response to 311 Call Center service request orders.

1B—Graffiti Removal—Contracted

The City utilizes contracted services to provide high-pressure dry sandblasting to clean concrete surfaces such as light poles, concrete block walls, and sidewalks that are hard to clean with wet sandblasting methods. Currently, the City does not have equipment capable of performing these services. Contracted services are assigned proactive routes and utilized for the heavy graffiti locations where City equipment is not as efficient.

Due to the restructuring of City crews and resulting efficiency gains, the Public Works Department eliminated a second graffiti contractor in FY 2008-09. This contractor specialized in large scale painting.

In calendar year 2008, the contractor removed graffiti from 27,324 locations or 31% of the removals completed.

Next Steps

The Public Works Department will maintain the high-pressure dry sandblasting contract at its current level. This is a specialized service City graffiti crews are unable to provide.

1C—Park Facilities

The collective efforts of the Public Works and Parks, Recreation and Community Services Departments have improved removal of graffiti within the 52 community and neighborhood parks. Public Works Department graffiti personnel perform daily site visits to report/remove graffiti at parks that do not have community centers, while Parks Recreation and Community Services personnel perform the same duties at parks with community centers. Site visits include visually inspecting the perimeter and the interior of the parks for graffiti.

Public Works Department personnel also work closely with volunteer groups associated with Mt. Rubidoux. The groups are a great source of input regarding incidents of vandalism. Currently, the Department handles pressure washing of all graffiti reported to the 311 Call Center on Mt. Rubidoux, with the exception of graffiti that needs to be removed immediately (i.e. profanity, racial remarks, and other offensive references) which will be covered by paint followed by a scheduled pressure washing. Further, the Department partners with the Friends of Mt. Rubidoux on coordinated efforts of weekly visits and monthly graffiti sweeps.

Next Steps

Public Works and Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department personnel will continue joint efforts of site visits, reporting of graffiti to 311 Call Center and immediately dispatching crews to remove graffiti within the park facilities. Immediate graffiti removal will keep our parks clean, attractive and graffiti free.

The departments will also evaluate new and/or existing graffiti mitigation strategies. Preventative technology such as Tagbak uses remote motion sensors to turn on the irrigation systems to protect walls and structures within parks from graffiti and vandalism will be evaluated.

1D—Freeway & Railway Corridors

The Public Works Department is working with the California Department of Transportation (CalTrans) to develop a rapid response program to address graffiti. During the past year, the Department obtained an Encroachment Permit from CalTrans for freeway on/off ramps. Under the permit, the Public Works Department is authorized to clean green signs and utility boxes on the ramps. Other graffiti must be handled by CalTrans under the rapid response program.

To address graffiti along the railroad corridors and bridges, the Public Works Department continues to work closely with the Union Pacific (UP) and Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railroads. In January 2009, for example, the City conducted a volunteer paint-out along 300 feet of railroad tracks behind Nichols Park. UP provided the requisite flag person to ensure safety of the volunteers. Public Works Department personnel have access to the UP right-of-way to clean graffiti through a right-of-entry agreement.

Next Steps

The Public Works Department will continue to work with CalTrans and the railroads to remove and/or have graffiti removed in a timely manner.

1E—Information technology—311 CRM

The newly implemented 311 Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system enhances the ability of the Public Works Department to efficiently remove graffiti by:

- Integrating to the latest master address database and GIS mapping software connection. Using the most up-to-date City address database ensures accurate location reporting (even as new areas are developed or annexed); and
- Identifying potential “duplicate” service requests by type and proximity—currently set for 500 feet. This avoids unnecessary/repeat trips by graffiti removal crews.

Next Steps

Integrate geo-imaging camera software with 311 CRM so that service request orders will close automatically when the graffiti documentation photos are taken by the graffiti personnel. Automating this process would reduce administrative responsibilities and allow employees more field time.

1F—Commercial Refuse Bins

Commercial refuse bins are an easy target for graffiti throughout the city. In furtherance of the City’s zero-tolerance graffiti policy, the Commercial Non-Exclusive Solid Waste Agreement approved by the City Council on June 24, 2008 requires bins to be maintained in a graffiti-free condition. Graffiti must be removed within 4 office hours following report to the contractor. Failure by a contractor to remove graffiti results in remedies/penalties for non-compliance.

Next Steps

Residents should be encouraged to report graffiti on commercial refuse bins to the 311 Call Center for cleaning.

1G—Security Cameras

The Public Works, Police, and Information Technology Departments are supplementing graffiti prevention and enforcement efforts with technology. Mobile security cameras are used within areas of recurring graffiti vandalism and are relocated as needed. The cameras have proven to be an effective deterrent.

Next Steps

The departments will continue to research new technology aiding in the detection and apprehension of graffiti criminals.

1H—Traffic Sign Reduction & Improved Sign Materials

The Public Works Department continues to remove superfluous traffic signs posted on City rights—of-way as a means of reducing visual blight and the number of graffiti targets. To date 4,000 traffic signs have been identified for removal from major arterial roadways. Of this total, approximately 2,600 have been removed. Once all the arterial signs are removed, the next phase of the project will emphasize secondary street locations.

The Department is also complying with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) requirements for high visibility sign material (DG3) with a graffiti coating for critical traffic signs. The material and coating dramatically increases sign brightness and protects signs so they are easier to clean and last longer.

Next Steps

The Public Works Department will continue implementation of the sign reduction program on arterial streets followed by secondary street locations.

2—Educate the Public to Prevent Graffiti

The Public Works Department has implemented the strategy of bringing together as many of its graffiti programs (school education, business outreach, and community engagement) as possible focusing them within a weekly revolving ward-by-ward strategy. With an emphasis on increasing awareness and visibility of the City zero tolerance approach toward graffiti this strategy was implemented the week of January 11, 2009 culminating in a kick-off event January 17 at Nichols Park. The January 2009 calendar is contained in Exhibit 1.

2A—School Education Program

In August 2007, a new graffiti education program was approved. To lead the education program, the Public Works Department designated a Graffiti Education Coordinator. The goal of the program is to educate young people, businesses and the public at large about graffiti and ways to prevent/eliminate graffiti from our community. A main focus is to teach people about the detrimental impact graffiti has on the social and economic fabric of the community.

Public Works Department and the Development Department marketing team worked with the Riverside and Alvord Unified School Districts to develop a creative look and tagline for the graffiti education program to ensure the creative look, tagline, and education materials are relevant to the target audience. The centerpiece of this effort is the *Take Back the Wall* presentation (Exhibit 2). The presentation explains what graffiti is, why graffiti appears, and how graffiti hurts our community. The presentation also stresses what the consequences of graffiti can be including arrest and felony charges if the graffiti creates more than \$400 in damage with financial responsibility for up to \$25,000 for the damage caused. Prevention measures are also highlighted.

Students are excited to receive a promotional item emblazoned with the *Take Back the Wall* message. Items include zipper pulls, download cards, screen cleaners, and tech decks. Students are challenged to participate in a dialogue about causes of and solutions to graffiti. By the end of the presentations, students are shouting out slogans such as “graffiti hurts” and typically ask City of Riverside staff follow-up questions about graffiti.

The school education program started in January 2009. The Public Works Department provides two school presentations per month. To date, the Department has presented four presentations to more than 700 students at Jefferson Elementary and Matthew Gage Middle Schools in the Riverside Unified School District and Wells and Loma Vista Middle Schools in the Alvord Unified School District. Presentations in March will involve Longfellow Elementary School and Chemawa Middle School in the Riverside Unified School District.

Next Steps

The Public Works Department continues to schedule presentations for the current school year, summer session, and 2009-10 school year. Other discussions with school representative involve a “train the trainer” approach for further program enhancement and community outreach. A “train the trainer” model involves training students to conduct graffiti presentations to their peers and lower grade students. These students would be club leaders identified for their leadership abilities.

Longer-term, the Public Works Department is evaluating the possibility of including graffiti education as part of the formal school curriculum. Graffiti education during class time would require school district approval. The graffiti school curriculum program would be modeled after the existing Riverside Public Utilities school classroom water and energy education program.

2B—Business Outreach

Business outreach consists of sharing strategies with local businesses to mitigate or eliminate graffiti vandalism on their property. The Graffiti Education Coordinator visits a minimum of three

businesses per week focusing on businesses with a high propensity of graffiti vandalism on their premises. The Graffiti Education Coordinator provides businesses with proven strategies to combat recurring graffiti including lighting, limiting access, using plant/landscaping to guard walls and buildings, surveillance, and quick graffiti removal.

Since implementing the strategy of bringing together as many of our graffiti programs (school education, business outreach, and paint-outs) as possible and focusing them within a weekly revolving ward-by-ward basis, the Graffiti Education Coordinator has provided business outreach to thirty-nine local businesses. Follow-up calls are made to each business by administrative personnel.

Next Steps

Given current economic conditions and the fact that the City removes graffiti in a timely manner and the 311 Call Center makes it is easy to report graffiti, business owners are reluctant to incur costs associated with graffiti-proofing their businesses. As such, the Public Works Department will work with the Greater Riverside Chambers of Commerce and Keep Riverside Clean and Beautiful (KRCB) to ascertain how we can best engage the business community and collectively encourage the implementation of preventative measures to beautify our community while lessening the need for graffiti removal services.

2C—Community Engagement

By conducting paint-outs and greenwall projects on a reoccurring basis, the Public Works Department encourages community awareness and involvement in the battle against graffiti.

Greenwall projects—the “greenwall” technique involves planting ivy or other plant material that will grow to protect walls from graffiti. The Public Works Department’s goal is to complete a greenwall project every other month or 6 times per year.

On February 3, 2009, the Department completed a large greenwall project on Tyler Street between Comanche and Shoshone Avenues with volunteers organized through the Greater Riverside Chambers of Commerce and KRCB. More than 100, 5-gallon ficus repens vines were planted along the public right-of-way wall. KRCB provided the plants and the City revitalized the irrigation system for this project.

The Department is currently in the planning phase of two upcoming greenwall projects:

- Irving/Lincoln—Ward 5—scheduled for March 28, 2009; and
- Victoria/14th—Ward 2—tentatively scheduled for May 23, 2009.

Paint-outs—paint-outs provide an opportunity for the community to come together to combat graffiti vandalism. Since graffiti is removed in less than 24-hours, the Public Works Department sponsors paint-outs twice a month to uniform walls and surfaces throughout the City. KRCB co-sponsors one of the events per month.

On January 17, 2009, more than 60 volunteers uniformed 1,100 linear feet of wall adjacent to Nichols Park and 300 linear feet of wall along the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) tracks behind Nichols Park. On February 7, 2008, 100 volunteers cleaned up the area adjacent to Lincoln Park. Another event was held February 28, 2009 adjacent to Norte Vista High School. More than 25 volunteers helped beautify surfaces along Crest and Rutland Avenues.

Next Steps

The Public Works Department will continue to sponsor 6 greenwall projects and 24 paint-out events per year. The Department is also working to cultivate volunteer relationships and exploring ways to

increase community participation in the events focusing on engaging the youth in our community.

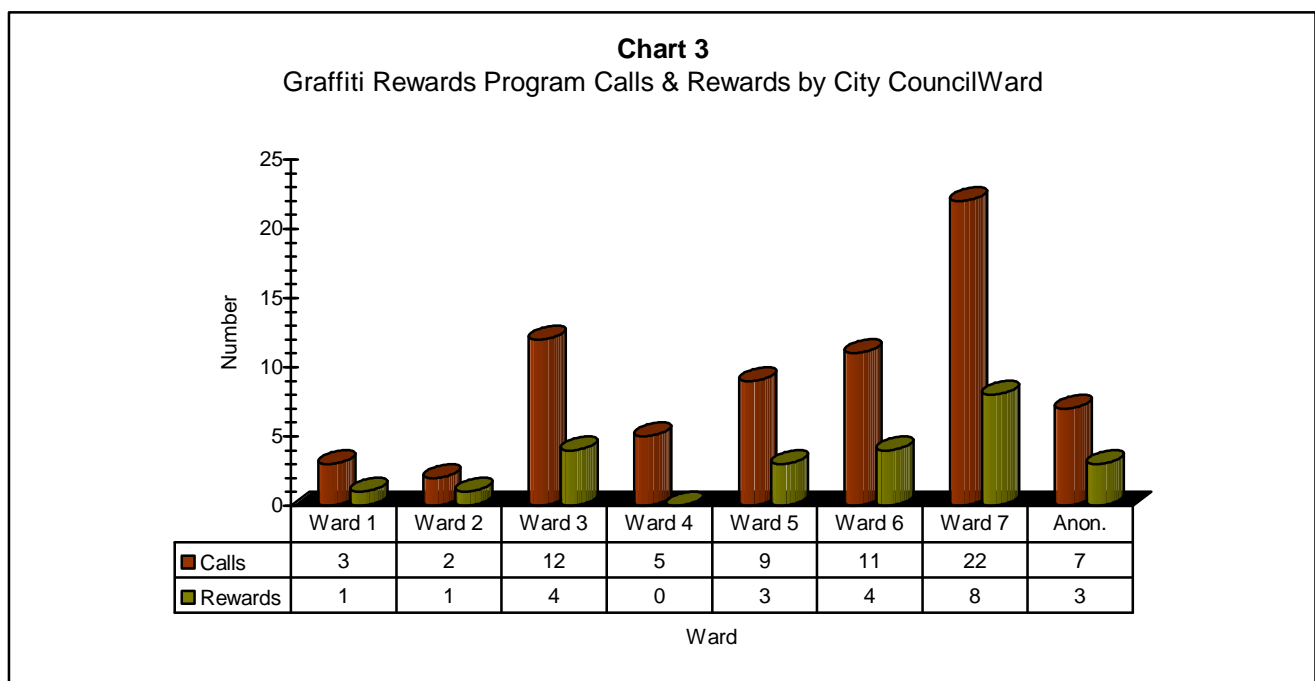
3—Graffiti Rewards Program

In August 2007, the Graffiti Rewards Program was approved. The program goal is to increase the City's ability to arrest graffiti criminals and reward witnesses who report graffiti crime. The Graffiti Rewards Program provides a \$500 cash reward for information that leads to the arrest of anyone for the crime of graffiti or possession of vandalism tools.

During the first year of the program several steps were taken to market the Graffiti Rewards Program including:

- May 2008—iKleen screen cleaner distributed at school education and other events. This promotional item is printed with the \$500 Graffiti Reward message;
- July 2008—the Public Works Department boosted public outreach with \$500 Graffiti Reward posters designed for distribution to businesses, schools and community groups (Exhibit 3);
- August 2008—3 public event banners with stands were purchased. These banners are used at various graffiti public education events including school presentations, Mayor's Night Out, and in the community paint-out and clean-up events to draw attention to the Graffiti Rewards Program (Exhibit 4); and
- March 2009—the graffiti program webpage will be launched. It will contain information on all components of the program including the Graffiti Reward Program.

Since the Police and Public Works Departments jointly launched the Graffiti Rewards Program in October 2007, the City has received 71 calls reporting graffiti activity - 22 callers have received \$500 graffiti rewards for a total \$11,000 disbursed to tipsters.



Next Steps

The key to continuing program effectiveness will be to keep the message fresh and top of mind. The Public Works Department plans to implement the following new marketing tools:

- Fleet signage—design signs for use on the existing refuse fleet to promote key program elements, such as Graffiti Rewards. The visibility of the trucks is high and would increase program name recognition which serves to keep the program top of mind;
- Vehicle wrap—to maximize program visibility and offer a fresh look to *Take Back the Wall*, install a vehicle wrap on the vehicle assigned to the Graffiti Education Coordinator. This vehicle travels throughout the community and this would invite interest from youth. In addition, its colorful design would also serve to attract interest from business and residents alike;
- Placement of *Take Back the Wall* and Graffiti Rewards Program promotional signage in public venues where pre-teens and teens frequent such as the Galleria at Tyler or Riverside Plaza.

Another option the Department is considering for the 2009-10 school year which would stimulate buy-in from youth and add a new and exciting perspective is development of a *Take Back the Wall* song-writing contest. The premise of the contest is as follows:

- The music for the song would be selected by the City and contestants would be judged based on lyrical content with a focus on anti-graffiti message;
- The contest would be broken into three age groups: Elementary (10-11); Middle School (12-13); High School (14-18); and
- The winning lyrics writer would be featured in a music video (public service announcement) to promote the anti-graffiti message and Graffiti Rewards Program. The video content could be: a) a mix of the lyrics into a single song or b) individual songs for each age group.

Other marketing efforts will continue, such as distribution of fliers, posters, promotional items and utility bill stuffers.

4—Document & Track Graffiti/Offenders—Graffiti Geo-imaging Camera System & Database

As approved in August 2007, the Information Technology, Public Works, and Police Departments have implemented a geo-imaging camera system and database to assist with graffiti documentation, tracking, reporting, and enforcement. Graffiti Program personnel and contractors are equipped with digital cameras with global positioning technology (GPS) to record graffiti incidents and location. The camera operator can input data such as the graffiti type, removal method, and labor hours.

Pictures are uploaded into the graffiti abatement tool (GAT) database daily. The system produces a GIS map of the graffiti location and links to the picture and stored data.

This data is available to the Police Department and City Attorney's Office. This has enhanced the Police Department's ability to identify criminals and investigate criminal activity. The Police Department and City Attorney's Office now have access to real-time abatement costs for criminal activity involving all tagging monikers throughout the City, further enhancing the City's ability to obtain full restitution from perpetrators.

Within the next few weeks, the Information Technology Department will complete the reporting requirements that will provide reporting capabilities by City Council ward.

Next Steps

The Information Technology Department has identified two next steps. The Department is creating a tool that will enable certain users of PDA's to photograph graffiti incidents, complete a brief form

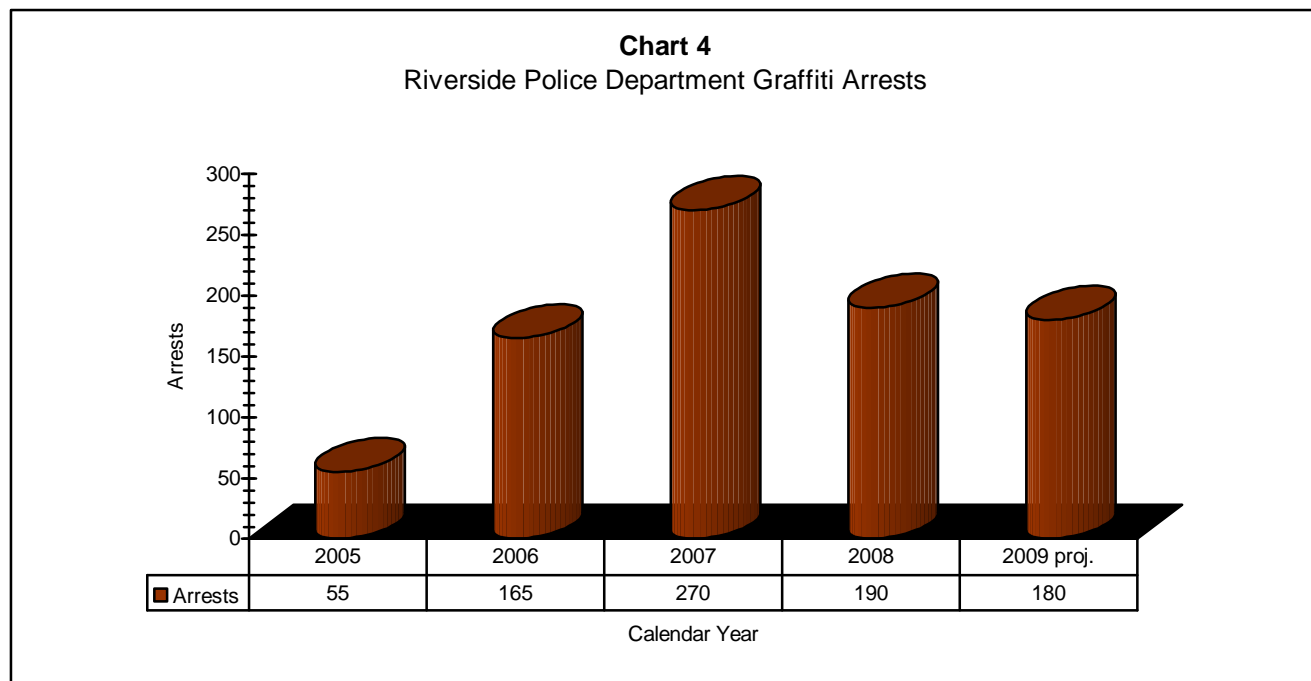
of the incident, and submit the information to the 311 Call Center 311 while in the field. This should be completed before fiscal year end.

Secondly, the City will begin using the Wi-Fi capabilities of the geo-imaging cameras. The cameras are equipped with Wi-Fi technology, enabling the cameras to provide close to real-time data availability. As Graffiti Program personnel move into a Wi-Fi location the graffiti data and images will automatically be submitted. Currently, when the crews use their geo-imaging cameras to document graffiti prior to removal they do not upload the image or record the completion until the end of the day. This distorts the amount of time required to remove graffiti. By utilizing the technology both assigned and proactive graffiti removals response times will be improved.

5—Graffiti Enforcement & Prosecution

The Police Department has stepped-up its Graffiti Unit efforts to arrest and prosecute graffiti offenders. Since August 2007, a second police officer has been assigned to the Graffiti Unit to assist in the identification, arrest, and prosecution of graffiti vandals. The Police Department now has two full-time sworn personnel assigned to graffiti investigations, and detectives from each neighborhood policing center assisting with investigations in their areas. In addition, the Police Department has hired an Office Specialist position to provide clerical support for database entries and the geo-imaging system information.

The Police Department is actively increasing its graffiti criminal arrest efforts. Since 2005, arrests have increased 245 percent through 2008, from 55 to 190 respectively. In calendar year 2009 though February, 30 arrests of graffiti criminals were made. 180 arrests are projected for 2009.



Additionally, the Police Department is effectively using the new information technology tools to enhance the prosecution of graffiti vandals.

- In May 2008, the Police Department conducted follow-up on a graffiti vandalism for a juvenile who had been arrested for tagging “STUK” /”STK” after the crime was witnessed by a citizen in the La Sierra area. Recognizing the moniker, Detective Nelson utilized the City’s Graffiti Analysis Tool (GAT) to determine there were 40 entries for the moniker “STUK”. Detective Nelson interviewed the minor and was able to obtain an admission of guilt on all

the cases. The minor was arrested for all tagging incidents and the reports sent to the Riverside County Juvenile Probation Department and the District Attorney's Office for filing of criminal charges. The City of Riverside Attorney's Office filed on all these cases for restitution and is now receiving payment from the minor's family for over \$6,000 in damages. The resident who witnessed the incident received a \$500 Graffiti Reward.

- In January 2009, Detective Nelson and the Riverside County Juvenile Probation Department conducted a Probation Search at the residence of a minor who had been arrested by the Norte Vista High School Resource Police Officer for vandalizing the school campus using the moniker "RASP". Detective Nelson recognized the moniker "RASP" and utilizing the GAT learned the individual was responsible for an additional fourteen (14) cases of graffiti vandalism. Detective Nelson was able to obtain an admission of guilt from the minor on all fourteen (14) incidents and placed the juvenile under arrest for all the graffiti vandalism. These cases have been submitted to the Riverside County Juvenile Probation Department and the District Attorneys Office for filing of criminal charges as well as to the City Attorneys Office for filing of civil liability suits.

6—Reimbursement for Property Damage

To supplement criminal prosecution of graffiti criminals, the City Attorney's Office seeks reimbursement for expenses associated with eradicating graffiti within the City. Cost recovery is sought for graffiti removal, investigation, and administrative costs. Since 2005, the City Attorney's Office has opened 230 graffiti cases. Of these 230 cases, some have resulted in the City filing a lawsuit, settling out of court with the individuals and/or their families, involved school property and not processed, received restitution from another court of law, or are awaiting resolution.

Table 1
Reimbursement for Property Damage

Description	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09 Proj.
Restitution	\$4,500	\$31,000	\$70,000	\$45,000
Lawsuits Filed	1	5	17	9
Settlements	2	7	60	35

As of September 2007, the Riverside County Juvenile Probation Department has made changes to the way it handles its graffiti-related cases as it relates to the City of Riverside. All juveniles that are convicted of graffiti crimes for the first time are now meeting individually with a probation officer and are placed on informal status. Any individual who has a prior history of graffiti or is arrested on a felony vandalism case is referred to the Riverside County District Attorney's Office for prosecution.

The City Attorney's Office, working with the Public Works Department, has implemented a community service option to provide some level of restitution in instances when monetary restitution is not possible. The offender and their parents have the option of requesting community service. If this option is chosen, the individuals are placed in the Public Works Department's Weekend Crew Program. Participants in the program are supervised and assigned clean-up tasks. To date, the City has received approximately 60 hours of community service from offenders and their parents.

Next Steps

Now that the logistics of the community service component are worked out, the City could require community service from graffiti criminals and their parents. This would reinforce the City's zero tolerance approach to graffiti, while enhancing the community through no-cost labor.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with the receipt and file of this report. The next steps outlined in the report would have varying fiscal impacts. Costs would be absorbed within the operating budgets of the relevant department(s).

Prepared by:	Siobhan Foster, Public Works Director
Certified as to	
Availability of funds:	Paul C. Sundeen, Assistant City Manager/CFO/Treasurer
Approved by:	Belinda J. Graham, Assistant City Manager for Bradley J. Hudson, City Manager
Approved as to form:	Gregory P. Priamos, City Attorney

Exhibits:

1. Graffiti Program Calendar
2. *Take Back the Wall* Presentation
3. Graffiti Reward Program Posters
4. Graffiti Reward Program Event Banners
5. Geo-Imaging System Graffiti Map